



F-15 Strike Eagle **Flight Operations Manual Update**

To The Shores of Tripoli, 1986 The Anti-Terrorist Airstrike

At 1:30 a.m., April 15, 1986, eighteen US Air Force F-111 bombers streaked around Cape Bon, Tunisia, and began the final leg of their 2,800 mile flight. Dropping to just 200 feet above the waves, they lined up for their final approach to the North African coast. Their mission: to attack the Libyan naval station at Sidi Bilal, the military section of Tripoli International Airport, and the military compound at Bab al Azizia, the personal headquarters of Libyan leader Muammar Kaddafi himself.

Meanwhile, five hundred miles to the east, the US Navy carriers America and Coral Sea were launching their A-6, A-7, and F/A-18 attack aircraft. The A-7's and F/A-18's carried HARM and Shrike anti-radar missiles. The A-6's, like the F-111's were equipped with state-of-the-art electronic bombing sights that would enable them to hit targets with pinpoint accuracy in the dead of night. Their mission: to destroy the Libyan's advanced MiG-23 fighters based at Bengasi airfield before they could scramble against the F-111's.

At precisely 1:54 a.m. the A-7's and A/F-18's rose to 500 feet. As Libyan radar locked on to them, they released their missiles, which rode down the radar beams to blind the defenders' electronic eyes. Six minutes later, at precisely 2 a.m., the F-111's and A-6's roared across the coast toward their targets. America's first anti-terrorist airstrike had begun.

These pilots were not the first Americans to fight the Libyans, however. Relations between the US and that Arab nation began to sour as soon as Kaddafi took over the government in 1969 and nationalized American oil interests. They became bitter when the Libyan leader used the profits to finance both expansionist schemes and terrorist activities. Further conflict resulted when Kaddafi laid claim to the entire Gulf of Sidra, a claim rejected by the American government.

In 1981 Libyan fighters attacked American fighters over the Gulf, which led to the clash that inspired F-15 STRIKE EAGLE's first scenario.

The Americans shot down the two attackers and, for the moment, the Libyans ceased to contest control of the Gulf. Kaddafi continued to meddle in the affairs of his neighbors, though, and he continued to sponsor international terrorism. By early 1986, his troops were fighting in Chad, and Libyan backed terrorists had conducted a series of grisly attacks on innocent travellers. They shot up airline ticket counters in Rome and Athens, and amongst their victims were a number of Americans.

The outraged American government resolved to make the sponsor of these assassins pay, and stepped up naval maneuvers in the Gulf of Sidra. When Libyan missile boats attacked, the Americans retaliated by sinking the ships and striking support installations ashore.

A week later, the Libyans responded in turn. A terrorist bomb exploded in a disco full of American soldiers in West Berlin, killing two people and injuring over one hundred others. When America's European allies refused to impose sanctions despite direct evidence of Libyan involvement, the Americans determined to act on their own.

As American preparations for the airstrike began, the British government did agree to allow the F-111's to fly from English bases, but the French and Spanish refused to permit the American bombers to fly over their territory, the direct route to Libya. Consequently, the American planes had to travel an extra 1,500 miles to reach their target.

As the F-111's and A-6's began their bombing runs, the Libyans fired a barrage of SAM-2, -3, -6, and -8 missiles and a hail of shells from ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft guns. Fortunately, with their radar destroyed, the air defense weapons lost most of their effectiveness. Using precision guided munitions, the F-111's bombed terrorist training facilities, Il-76 transport aircraft that had been used to support terrorist activities, and Kaddafi's personal compound, the nerve center of his government. While Kaddafi himself was not an official target, the Americans hoped at least to unnerve him and perhaps to eliminate him.

As chance would have it, Kaddafi was in a tent somewhat removed from the main compound when the bombs hit, and so escaped injury. Nevertheless, the damage to his headquarters was extensive, and the other airstrikes achieved

similar success. The A-6's destroyed four MiG fighters and two helicopters on the ground, while the F-111's destroyed five transports and damaged the naval facilities at Sidi Bilal. Civilian casualties were relatively light due both to the sophisticated electronics and munitions the bombers used and to the American's instructions not to release their ordinance unless they could identify a target with absolute certainty. American losses were also light: just one F-111 went down in flames, and a second was damaged badly enough that it was forced to make an emergency landing in Spain.

While the airstrike's long term effects are uncertain, it clearly constituted a major technical accomplishment that demonstrated the global reach of American air and seapower.

MISSION 8:

THE ANTI-TERRORIST AIRSTRIKE

Libya, April 14-15, 1986

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE was designed long before the anti-terrorist airstrike, yet playing it can give you an appreciation of the skill and bravery exhibited by the American airmen. The mission had three primary features: it was a low level attack, it met intense anti-aircraft defenses, and it was conducted at night. By selecting the scenarios indicated below and following the special instructions, you can recreate each of these essential features of the raid. For maximum realism, try working your way up to a skill level of ACE!

8.1 THE BOMBING RUN

To recreate the bombing run conducted by the American F-111's against Kaddafi's compound, select Mission 1, Libya. Refer to page 32 in the Flight Operations Manual and follow the following flight plan:

- 1) Defeat Libyan interceptor with either your cannon or a short-range missile;
- 2) turn right to head north and descend to below 5,000 feet;
- 3) proceed north until you are well out over the Mediterranean Sea;
- 4) make a descending left hand turn to head south at 1,000 feet;
- 5) set the navigation cursor on Kaddafi's Command Center, the primary target;
- 6) as you cross the coast, drop to 200 feet and engage your afterburner;
- 7) as you approach the target, reduce power to 100%, climb to 500 feet and arm your bomb targeting system;
- 8) release your bombs, rearm your bomb

sight, and release a second stick of bombs on the target; 9) immediately engage afterburners, pull the nose up and climb to 1,200 feet to avoid the blast from your own bombs; 10) to escape and return to the carrier, remain in afterburner and climb to above 40,000 feet or descend again to 200 feet and race northeast toward the carrier.

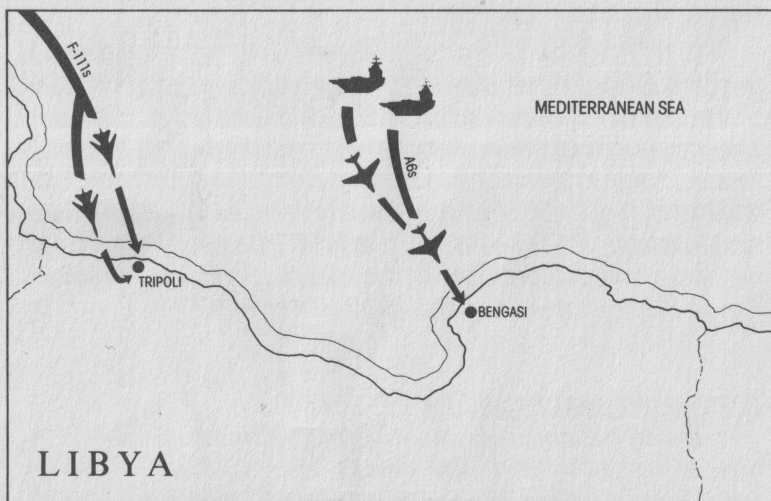
You can use the same basic approach to recreate the airstrike against the airfield at Bengasi. For the greatest realism, you should return to base after each mission in order to repair and replenish your plane.

8.2 THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT ENVIRONMENT

To experience the intensity of the anti-aircraft defenses the American airmen encountered, select MISSION 6 and attack the primary target as Baghdad using a bombing run similar to that described above in section 8.1.

8.3 NIGHT BOMBING RUN

To conduct a night precision bombing raid like the one the raiders actually carried out, select MISSION 3 and execute a bombing run similar to that described above in section 8.1.



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